

SPECIAL DELIVERIES

• RICHARD KEHL •

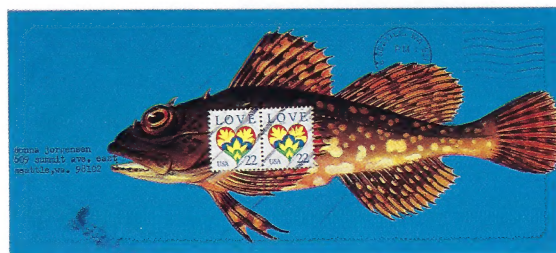
I have been a teacher of art, a fine artist, and an illustrator for more than 30 years. As a collagist, I collect and remember striking images, whatever their source. I delight in the surprising juxtapositions of these images. I disagree with that view of art which confines its efforts to a narrow realm of galleries and museums. I prefer that designs affect as many areas of existence as possible. Over the years these tendencies have led me to decorate the envelopes I send in the mail. Some of my decorated envelopes are shown in this booklet, and twelve of my most recent efforts are presented in this box, with blank labels so that you may use them to start down the path of decorated deliveries.



Richard Kehl is a professor in the School of Art at the University of Washington. His work has been shown in over seventy galleries around the world. He has had mural commissions from Pepsi Cola, The National Film Board of Canada, and the Vatican. Corporate clients include American Airlines, Microsoft and Hallmark. He has been reproduced in ARTS, PRINT, CA, GRAPHIS, HOW, IDEA and the NEW YORK TIMES. Some of his books are: 100 WAYS TO HAVE FUN WITH AN ALLIGATOR, THE FEMININE, LOVERS, and HOW TO MAKE A ZERO BACKWARDS.



I have kept very few of the envelopes I have created. They have been sent away to many people in many places, and have, like other ephemeral things, been discarded and forgotten. Those in this book were all saved by my agent, and I thank her for allowing me to reproduce them here.





The blue envelope is a simple photocopy on colored paper. The drama between these colors, and the excitement of a stamp sticking out from the envelope's surface into open space, provide it's visual character (the stamp is given strength by being backed with another of it's kind, gum applied to gum.)

The green envelope utilizes a picture of a little boy elephant reproduced from an old children's book. Once the choice was made to use him, it

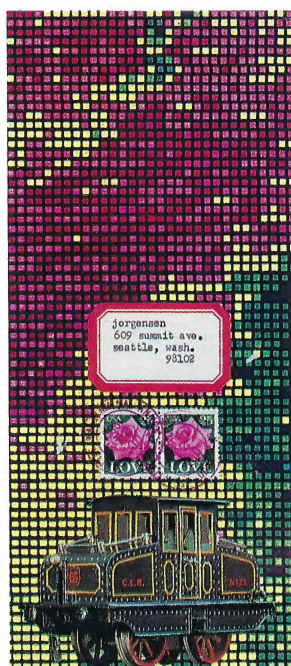
seemed inevitable that he should carry the address, rushing it forward like a gift he has been asked to deliver. The stamp, with the bird who seems like a friend to the cooperative elephant, is placed jauntily so as to participate in the forward movement.



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Like a poet's rhyme scheme, or a miniaturist's ivory oval, the envelope decorator confronts an entertaining set of constraints. The envelope is fairly small (usually a rectangle). On it there must appear a legible address and a postage stamp. In this simple realm even the slightest visual touches are very noticeable.

In the Realm of Envelopes the original surface may be accepted or changed. On these two pages only the envelope on the lower left has had a new surface applied.

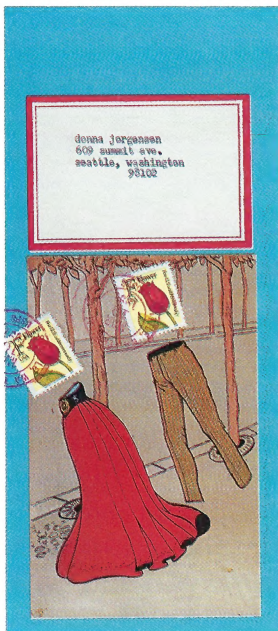


The top left specimen provides evidence that black and white art is visually effective. I chose to make it almost fill the yellow envelope to emphasize the power and simplicity of the image. Notice that the postal employee who hand canceled this stamp has courteously, or perhaps accidentally, canceled it with parallel lines at the same angle as those on the lighthouse.

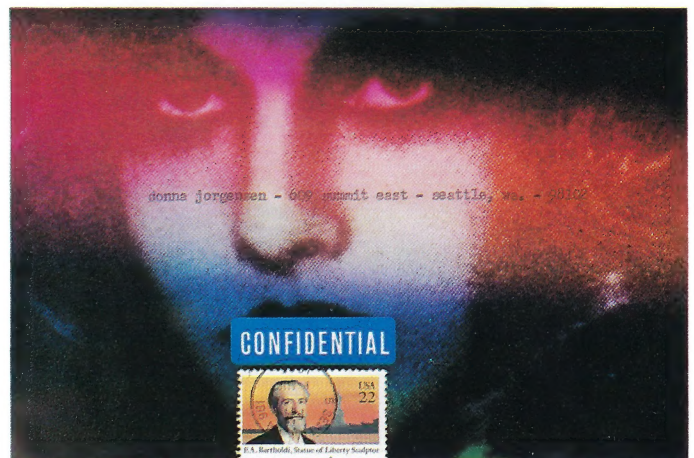


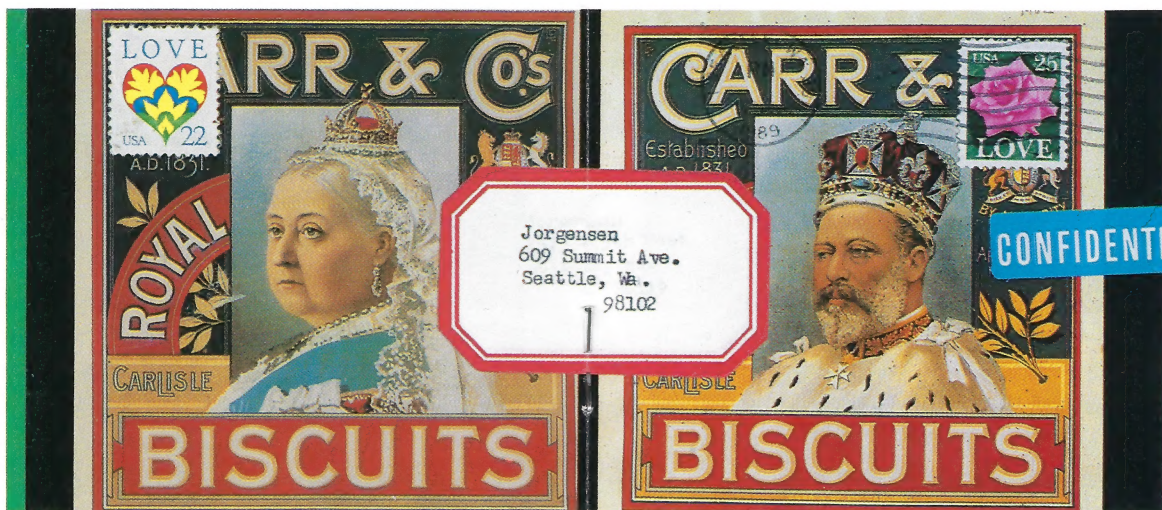
A few words about the post office. I have almost always found them to be receptive and flexible in dealing with my unusual mailings, as long as the envelope design shows good intent. I will say more about this in the last section of this booklet.

The little girl with the easel utilizes a picture from an old postcard. I have added string tags, a favorite strategy of mine. The one across the easel is pasted down. The lower one hangs free. The envelope on the lower left attempts to utilize the stamps as a part of the design. The skirt and the trousers, which in the original stand alone, are here completed by the stamps. On the subject of stamps, let me stress that an array of stamps is a great assistance in making your mailings attractive. I recommend that you haunt your post office, stockpiling those with interesting designs.



When the postal rates rise you may be left with stamps no longer useful for a first class mailing, but you can supplement these with more stamps of smaller denomination, sometimes overpaying the postage to achieve an exciting effect. The mailing on the lower right contrasts the woman in deep emotion with the bright message of the stamp and label.





These queen and king labels are from a book on biscuit labels. The pairing of things nearly the same, but different, is a simple device to capture interest. I have placed postage stamps at the far left and far right, and put the address label right in the center, to continue the theme of symmetry. The small label overlapping and extending from the right image is just enough to keep the symmetry from having total control.

I started with two identical pictures (If you wish to achieve this, but have only one picture, you can

get a colored photocopy made at the same size.). Over the left image I applied flowers. It seemed to me a felicitous combination. The right picture bears the familiar CONFIDENTIAL label (one should explore the stock of stationery stores for ready made labels, such as FRAGILE, PERSONAL, RUSH, FIRST CLASS, and blank address labels). In this case it does suggest that the two girls are not merely posing, but are sharing a confidence, which is a common motive in writing a personal letter.



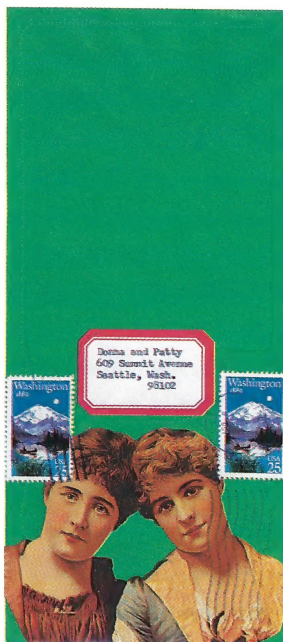


Several of the mailings in this booklet proceed from my belief in the power of the human face. In the left example I have used a section of the face of a woman from a Dutch oil painting. The beauty of the painting, the sideways look, the closeness of her to us, all of these say, "This is not merely a designed envelope, this is a means of carrying words from one human being to another". All designs should be selected for the right message. Ideally, one creates an envelope with the person and the message in mind.

The blue envelope contains a simple black and white photocopy of a tulip, which has been cut out and pasted onto a blue envelope. It shows that very simple materials can have a powerful impact when left to their own devices.



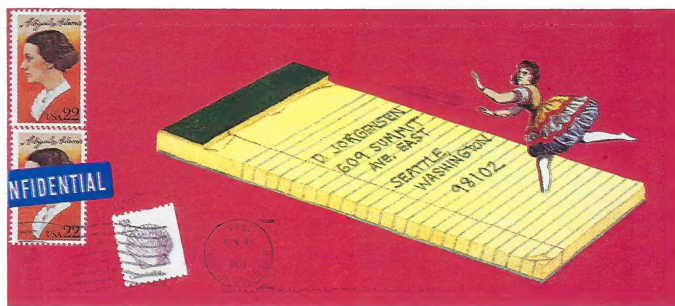
An archive of images for use in envelope garnishment can be built inexpensively by collecting pictures from magazines and advertisements. Thrift shops often have very inexpensive magazines. Photocopies of pictures in books are excellent when one needs a specific image.



The disposition of the materials on the envelope's surface is obviously critical to its impact. Many effective combinations can be made by leaving a large amount of empty space on the envelope. The additions to the green envelope use less than half of the space on purpose. This disposition of the material makes the presences of the two girls more immediate. They are tightly held by the two stamps and the label above their heads, and

we, in turn, are held by their gazes.

This red envelope is an example of the good use to which humble materials can be put. I discovered the yellow pad in an advertisement for stationery supplies. Mounted on the envelope it contributes to a pleasant illusion. The dancer sinking into its surface, the floating pencil, the twinned stamps (one effaced), the angled seashell stamp, and the unplanned, but felicitous, upside down stamp cancellation all add, I hope, to a mysterious whole.





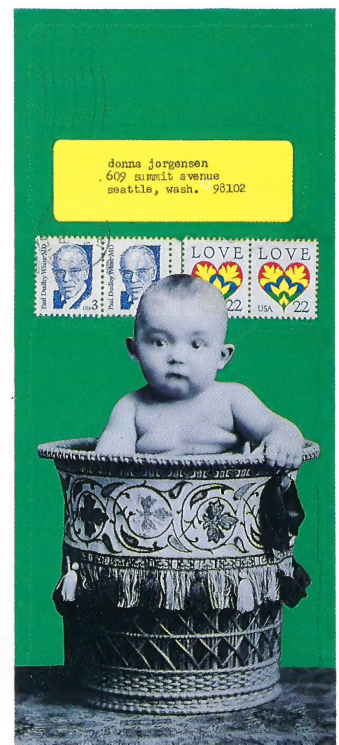
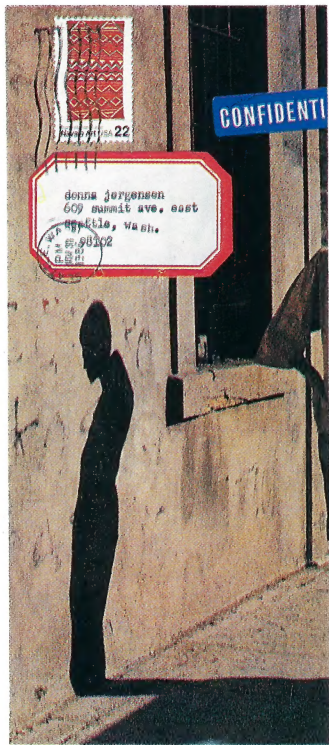
The envelopes on this page are all simple in their impact. The one at the top is basically an excursion to a park of long ago. The bright blue stamp and sticker contradict the aged quality of the image to good effect and remind us that this is a mailing. The shadow is a portion of a photograph which appealed to me, and I have placed on that rough wall a weaving (on a stamp) which seems to fit there. The lady just pierced by Cupid (a 1920's illustration) is properly stamped with four love stamps.

The top mailing is an example of a device I

should use more often. Foreign postage stamps open an almost endless vista of imagery (packets of foreign stamps can be purchased very inexpensively). The clear addition of a U.S. postage stamp adds a note of confusion conquered.

The lovely lady imposed on the white rectangles, with a single love stamp, is hard to ignore. The duplication of labels is an effective device, and easily done.

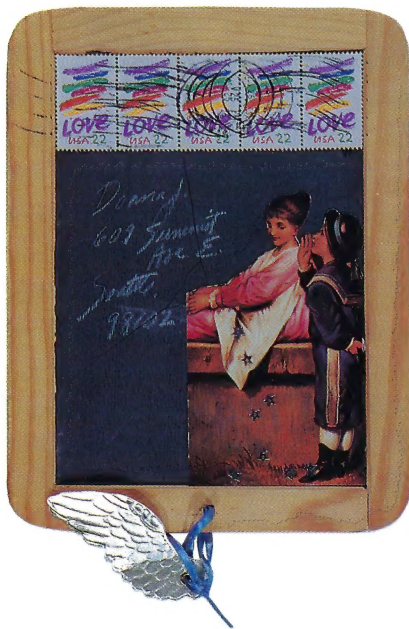
Love, a famous doctor, a new baby being presented. Visual jokes are an excellent challenge, to make and to solve.





Each of the mailings on these two pages, and the back cover, extend the idea of a decoration in some way. They all point to the endless ways that mail can be adorned.

The post office has been very flexible, as you see, but several things must be stressed. Nothing that could cut a worker should be used. Do not use staples or pins. Odd materials must be clearly what they are, not disguised as an envelope, so they cannot inadvertently damage a postage handling machine. If your mailing is unusual, request hand cancellation or signify Special Handling and double the postage.



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